

# DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

MAY 1941

DOCUMENTARY—THE CREATIVE INTERPRETATION OF REALITY

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## A Tax on Education

A "SUPPLEMENTARY DECISION" regarding Purchase Tax issued by Customs and Excise appears to many people to be an unwarrantable extra tax on sub-standard films used for educational purposes. Hitherto the interpretation of the regulations has been that copies of films "proposed solely for sale to an educational authority for hire out to schools, and subject to control by the authority, and not otherwise offered for general sale or hire to the public, are not chargeable with tax". This in effect meant that the copies of films supplied by most of the major documentary libraries were not subject to purchase tax. The new decision, however, appears to reverse this interpretation, for it is now stated that sub-standard film

copies will be chargeable with tax unless it can be guaranteed that "no copies of the film are, or will be, available for general purchase". This slightly vague pronouncement is supplemented by the statement that "a film made to the order of a sponsor will be chargeable with tax unless the sponsor can give an undertaking that *no copies of the film will be sold*". Now several non-theatrical libraries such as the Petroleum Films Bureau, British Commercial Gas Association, etc., find that copies of their films are in constant demand from official bodies—not only from the Ministry of Information, but also from the Services. Large numbers of copies of films on technical subjects are being purchased by Service authorities, and the new ruling establishes that not merely are these copies



subject to tax, but also that any other copies—made for whatever purpose—are also subject. In fact, once one copy of a film has been sold, *all* subsequent copies are now apparently taxable. As a result, not only are the M.O.I., the War Office, and similar departments paying purchase tax on educational films, *but also the libraries themselves*. This latter point clearly means a reduction of the number of copies available for circulation, since the incidence of the purchase tax will reduce the number of copies which can be made on a yearly printing allocation. If this new regulation continues it will be to the advantage of non-governmental libraries to refuse to sell copies of their films to Government Departments or anyone else, since by so doing they will be able to avoid tax on their own stock, and thus keep a reasonable number of copies available for their own free circulation. Thus the situation created by this new ruling is not merely unfair; it is also ridiculous. It is manifest lunacy to penalise an educational library for selling films *at cost* to, say the Royal Air Force. No doubt the R.A.F. can afford the extra tax, and probably can get a subsequent rebate; but that is no reason to reduce the number of copies of films available to schools and similar bodies. Yet that in effect is what the new ruling means—a tax on visual education and on morale and prestige films. We hope that the Government Departments concerned in the use of sub-standard films will bring pressure to bear on Customs and Excise and will see that the new ruling is drastically revised.

### Out of the Frying Pan . . .

THE RECENT PLAN for nationalisation of the film industry advanced by the Association of Cine Technicians coincides with the publication of a Manifesto issued by the 1941 Committee which draws attention to the theory that a time is being reached when "uncontrolled competitive capitalism must give way at all points to a monopoly system"—which system many have hoped would be socialism but which, as the Nazi system has shown, may be nothing of the sort. "When big industrial magnates are drawn from private firms to take over departments of State, the interests of these firms are not necessarily thereby subordinated to the interests of the nation. Big business may take over Whitehall; but can democracy control big business?" These and similar considerations must loom largely in films people's minds at the moment, particularly in view of the enquiry now being conducted by the Ministry of Labour in connection with the attempt to solve the muddle about deferment. Some aspects of the problem are dealt with in our leading articles this month; but obviously a considerable amount of quick thinking and free discussion is necessary among film people if an inefficient compromise solution (with sinister long term implications) is to be avoided by next July.

### Industry Personnel

THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR have made two concessions to the Film Industry on the de-reservation of its personnel. In the first instance they maintained the age of reservation for most

technicians at 30—instead of raising it to 35 on April 1st; and, although retaining complete de-reservation on July 1st, have instituted a committee with very wide terms of reference to examine the structure of the Industry, not only in regard to the minimum personnel who must be retained to keep it going, but also to consider questions of rationalisation, the objective being to release as much man-power as possible.

This committee purports to be representative of the film production side of the Industry, in spite of the fact that the Ministry of Labour dispensed with the traditional calling of representatives from associations, and instead appointed individuals they thought qualified to represent the different interests. At least, this must be the assumption, for the section of the Film Industry most important to the Government in war-time has been entirely excluded from any representation on this committee.

The feature producers are represented by three members; yet the documentary and short film interests have not, at the time of going to press, been asked to send a representative. It has been argued that they may represent their point of view to this committee by means of interviews. This is hardly satisfactory, for the members of the committee are not in a position to make recommendations affecting a section of the Industry—namely the documentary and short film section—that they can know little about.

The problems of the feature producers and the documentary and short film producers are quite distinct. In the case of the feature producers, it is soundly argued that a measure of British film production must be carried on in this country. We must maintain an entertainment film industry—if we are not to throw away a national asset that has been built up with great difficulty ever since the war, and one that is valuable for export, and valuable for indirect propaganda.

Documentary and short film makers, however, are an even more vital necessity in wartime. They are concerned with the production of the propaganda films for the Ministry of Information, with the great programme of training films for the Army, the cultural propaganda of the British Council, and with all other film requirements of Government departments. If they are to be denied a voice in the planning of the Film Industry for wartime production, how are the film requirements of Government departments to be met?

There is no doubt that the reason they have not been asked to send representatives to this committee is the contempt of the Industry's speculators for so-called "shorts". It seems that this contempt has communicated itself to the Ministry of Labour who, we feel sure, cannot be aware of the vast volume of film production required by Government departments and being made by the documentary and short film interests. We cannot help but think that either malice or ignorance has dictated the denial to the documentary and short film makers of the right to a voice in the deliberations of the committee.

It is to be wondered whether the Government departments who are ordering films from the documentary and short film makers are aware of the situation; for, without representatives on this committee, it is to be feared that the interests of those organisations and companies making such films will undoubtedly go to the wall.



# THE NATION AS FILM PRODUCER?

These are days when Whitehall and Wardour Street are eyeing each other with considerable speculation. Official Committees concerned in some way or other with the film industry spring up like mushrooms overnight, there is talk of a Films Commission, of a Films Credit Bank; Government Departments are becoming increasingly involved in film production for propaganda or instruction. It is not surprising, therefore, that there should be talk of the rationalisation of the industry and that the occasional substitution of nationalisation should be more than a slip of the tongue. The Association of Cine-Technicians, with admirable courage, has come out boldly with a closely-reasoned case for partial nationalisation of the industry, and "Documentary News Letter" presents below two conflicting views on the subject of State ownership and control which we believe represent typical cases against and for this revolutionary step.

ANY CRITICISM directed against proposals for nationalisation of the Film Industry must of necessity be arguments against the general principles of nationalisation. At the same time, the nationalisation of such a highly individual and creative thing as films is particularly difficult.

The making of films, in every department, depends on the individual ability of creative people. The making of films hinges on the independent thought of these individuals and on their ability to make individual decisions. Experiences prove that these abilities cannot be freely exercised under Government control. A fair example of this is the B.B.C., where the system has tended to stop progressive radio technique, and to use the microphone as a purely reproductive instrument.

Under existing conditions it seems inevitable that if you nationalise any industry, you create a bureaucracy, and bureaucracy creates a privileged class whose main function becomes not the job it is undertaking, but the mechanics of operation. Furthermore, the officials of any nationalised industry who cannot be removed because of the present Government Civil Service system, can see their life stretching ahead of them to old age, irrespective of the amount of creative ability they display. Their future is secured, and the office routine and the inter-departmental squabbles become their life.

This generation, even with a more progressive educational system, is not advancing sufficiently to realise its responsibility to the community or the State. In a properly educated and advanced democracy the individual expresses his individuality, creative or organisational, in the service of the community. At present it is the issue of self-preservation that matters most to the individual, so that the bureaucratic office holder becomes solely concerned in holding his job and not in the furtherance of the public service he has undertaken. With a properly educated population, the evils of bureaucracy would undoubtedly disappear, and it would be the interest of every citizen to promote every aspect of the community's work. Until we succeed in achieving a universal sense of individual and collective responsibility, the bureaucrats can in no way re-organise or run industry better than private interests spurred by economic necessity.

It may have been inherent in the Russian character that any form of the public service must be inefficient: yet there is little doubt that the bureaucratic machine built up by Stalin has hampered the development of creative film work. Under the dynamic of Lenin's leadership the Russian Film Industry was forging ahead into the leading position in the world, this dynamic continuing for many years after Lenin died, when it gradually went down until it became a mechanical servant of bureaucracy.

It has been said before that the Film Industry is probably the most individualistic and creative of any of the professions, and it attracts people with this type of mind. It attracts the creative artist, but the creative artist or the individualist cannot work freely under the supervision of committees. A film unit cannot be run freely with success under bureaucratic control. The case of the Crown Film Unit cannot be opposed to this argument, because the original principles of dealing with bureaucratic interference, laid down by John Grierson in the past when it was the G.P.O. Film Unit, still, to a certain extent exist; and there is the opportunity for the individual film worker in the unit to develop and make his films on his own individual lines. There is no doubt, however, that the unit operates inefficiently, for although it turns out good films these are few in number and bear no relation to the production overhead, which, in comparison with overheads in the open market, is burdened with bureaucratic delays in addition to normal production difficulties.

Many of the weaknesses of nationalisation are to be found even in the present system of Government commissioned films. To take one concrete instance, a film was commissioned by the Ministry of Information on behalf of another department, the scenario was prepared within four days and yet it took four weeks for the film to be put into production, as the scenario had to be passed by twelve people. This was not a secret film; it was a simple film on one aspect of our social work, and yet it was passed from hand to hand for this long period. This is not an isolated case. Indeed, one of the main difficulties of bureaucracy is divided responsibility. There is no one, except at the very top, who can give an order, and everyone else is frightened in case they make a mistake.

There is one other factor peculiar to films that even now



exists in Government film production, and that is the fundamental belief in the ordinary person that he can produce films better than the film producer. It is similar to the belief, at one time, of the man in the street that he could act as well as any person on the stage; and the other fundamental belief every individual has that he could write a novel if he could only spare the time. Bureaucrats and committee men who have to concern themselves with films can thus exercise their suppressed desires to be "film producers." Creative people making films for Government departments even now are losing a certain amount of their self-respect in their attempts to accommodate their views to these jacks-in-office. How much worse would it be for them if they were directly employed by these bureaucrats. At the present moment the film maker can retain a certain amount of independence. Were he to be placed under the control of the present Civil Service system he could no longer retain one shred of self-respect.

For reasons stated above, it would be a disaster were this

Industry to be nationalised, yet the Film Industry itself is undoubtedly one of the most disorganised, badly run, overlapping industries in the country. But its problems will not be solved by taking over the film companies and putting Civil Servants alongside them. There are now signs of responsibility in the Film Industry, brought about by the crisis of war, and if it is left to develop on the present lines, there should be no need to bring it under Government control.

Already there has been a sinking of individual interests among the production companies. There has been co-operation in meeting common problems. Many have placed themselves unreservedly at the service of the community. They are adopting internal schemes of self-rationalisation, and if some incentive were given them from the other sides of the industry, they would probably be only too happy to reorganise themselves with more sense of community interest.

The Film Industry will serve the community best through self-regulation and not through nationalisation.

## A CASE FOR NATIONALISATION

FOR MANY PEOPLE there is no doubt that the film industry will ultimately be nationalised. They believe that the persistence of any imaginable form of civilisation can be assured only if all industry and commerce is brought finally under the control of the State. But even for these supporters of eventual nationalisation there remains the immediately pressing question of whether some form of nationalisation should be applied to the film industry now.

If such a step were to be taken, it would mean the application of nationalisation at the higher superficial levels of the industrial structure whilst private enterprise remained untouched at the foundations. To this procedure there are obvious objections. There would appear to be considerable doubt whether any industry which forms only a subsidiary part of the economic structure could be nationalised completely before the entire banking and credit systems of the country have come under State control. For this reason, any plan for immediate nationalisation of the film industry is likely to go only part way towards full State control and in all probability it is likely to be a compromise which permits the retention of some measure of private enterprise. This compromise is envisaged in the plan put forward by the Association of Cine Technicians.

There is another main objection to nationalisation: many people are apprehensive of the power which the State might exercise to control not only the commercial aspects of film production, but also the creative aspects. They believe that any industry in which questions of personal belief and personal taste are involved cannot be satisfactorily administered by a Government Department. They believe that a measure of individual freedom to express views which might not be forthcoming from (or approved by) Government Departments is essential if the film industry is to be more than an organisation making screen propaganda for the Government of the day.

This objection is also met in part by the compromise nationalisation plan put forward by A.C.T., wherein both State enterprise and private initiative are provided for. It is also probable that provision could be made under any complete and uncompromising nationalisation scheme for the exercise of creative freedom. In this connection some supporters of nationalisation will not be slow to point out that the opportunity for expression of minority opinion is already almost non-existent, and that by the very nature of its structure and purposes the existing commercial organisation imposes a censorship of idea which is, perhaps, more severe than would be established by any State film organisation.

It is probably true to say, however, that bearing in mind the fact that a war period is no time to look for special toleration from the State in matters of personal expression, and in view also of the difficulties of nationalising from above at a time when the commercial and financial structure of the country is by no means flexible, a majority of people would feel that the present is no time to take the film industry out of private hands. The weight of opinion would be against such a step at this moment if it were not for a single fact which, by its importance, may be sufficient to swing the decision in the opposite direction.

This fact is that nationalisation is probably essential at this juncture if the British film industry is to continue to exist. The reason is twofold. To begin with, it may prove impossible to retain sufficient personnel from military service to continue film production unless the industry is rationalised in such a way that the Ministry of Labour can accurately assess its manpower needs and equate them, in terms of economical use of labour, with the demands of the services. Rationalisation to a degree where the wartime rôle of the film industry was clearly defined would probably mean rationalisation which could not stop short of full State control. The second reason why the



continued existence of the film industry may be dependent on some degree of nationalisation is that the film industry can only meet U.S. competition if it is given legislative protection to ensure an adequate home market. The reasons for this are now widely known. They arise largely from the size of the U.S. home market. The U.S. industry has good economic reasons to aim in general at a more elaborate product than is normally practicable in this country where the home market is not large enough to yield a profit on expensive productions. British producers cannot compete in a free market with the U.S. industry. Moreover the last war gave U.S. film interests a widespread hold over world markets which they still largely retain. These two facts gave rise to the quota legislation of recent years.

To-day the British film industry is faced with a further threat. The financial and economic negotiations which must follow inevitably upon the growing economic dependence of Great Britain upon the United States may conceivably result in the film industry becoming involved in schemes of economic adjustment between the two countries. Were this to happen it would appear to be unlikely that the British industry could be preserved in face of the possible demands of its transatlantic rival unless the Government decided to preserve it—bearing in mind its relative financial insignificance in the general field of trade and commerce. In the event of such preservation being decided upon it could only be carried through successfully if a large measure of co-ordination were imposed from official quarters. Here again it would appear probable that if official control, co-ordination or efficient legislative protection is necessary, then the greatest benefit can only be derived if full State control is imposed.

For the foregoing reasons it appears, therefore, that if the British film industry is to survive on any basis which permits of efficient operation, then the industry must in some degrees be brought under State control.

But the case for nationalisation is not proved until it can be shown that the survival of the British film industry is a national necessity. There is no doubt that support could be won for the view that we should, in the present critical juncture, rest content to receive our film entertainment from the United States, preserving only a section of the industry for the production of necessary programmes of propaganda films.

This case cannot be sustained, even if it be argued that military necessity demands the sacrifice of the British feature film industry. But far from military necessity requiring the sacrifice of the industry, the plain fact is that military necessity cannot contemplate the collapse of the British film industry. The world is learning that wars are won less by military might than by the will of belligerent peoples. At this critical stage of the struggle it is of first importance that all expression of national identity should be strengthened rather than weakened. All media for the expression of national tradition and culture must be turned to the purpose of building or reinforcing in the minds of the people of this country a full conception of what is meant by "The British People". The purpose of this national self-consciousness is not to build a *Herrenvolk* conception, but to reveal a path to a true understanding of the British people's world position and the rôles which lie open to it in the

establishment of international order. The alternative is to allow British identity to be submerged under the national traits of other peoples.

There remains an equally strong reason for continuing to distribute good British feature films abroad. Only the United States has shown a proper appreciation of the rôle of the film in creating international understanding and sympathy. Through its films the United States has set before the people of other countries a conception of America and the American way of life which has had the result of making the United States a familiar country wherever there is a cinema screen. The benefit to American peace-time trade is obvious. Less obvious is the extent to which such widespread sympathy adds to the military power of the nation which inspires it. Military alliances are facilitated by a pre-existent sympathy between the peoples of the States concerned. For the same reason it may be difficult to arouse any enthusiasm for a war against a people who have been intimately revealed through the medium of the screen. Evidence of the military value of a wide international distribution of a nation's films would conceivably be provided if the Axis should ever find itself at war with the United States. There would appear to be little doubt that the German and Italian Governments would find themselves faced with a serious problem in breaking down American sympathies which had grown up as a result of Hollywood's national salesmanship. It will be generally agreed also that the support of United States public opinion for the British cause has been influenced by the distribution of British films in American cinemas.

The facts appear clearly to demonstrate that a flourishing British film industry must at all costs be preserved. The long term post-war case for preserving all manifestations of national culture will meet with small opposition and needs little arguing. The immediate case for preserving the industry in time of war is less clearly recognised but no less strong. Once it is agreed that the industry must be preserved, then the necessity for legislative protection against American competition must be accepted. It would appear that such legislative protection might most efficiently be a part of a wider scheme of State control of the industry which, with proper safeguards for creative freedom, could bring other important benefits to the industry. It is hardly necessary to mention the production inefficiency, the racketeering and the waste of money and spirit, which has so far characterised a great part of the British film industry under a policy of splendid individualism. To some the threat of bureaucratic control may seem no less obnoxious. The answer would appear to be that under private enterprise the public had little opportunity to clear up the unsavoury mess and substitute for it an organisation which would give it the films which it needed. Given nationalisation the way to public control is opened. Difficulties there would be, mistakes and bad films would be inevitable, but the public would have been given an opportunity it has never possessed of exercising an influence on the entertainment provided for its consumption; and collaborating with the public would be the vast majority of film makers—honest, efficient people who have been waiting too long for the opportunity to practise their craft under tolerable conditions.



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## FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

A film-maker's appraisal of Ernest Hemingway's new novel, the title of which is taken from the following passage by Donne:—"No man is an *Iland*, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*; if a *Clod* bee washed away by the *Sea*, *Europe* is the lesse, as well as if a *Promontorie* were, as well as if a *Mannor* of thy friends or of *thine owne* were; any man's *death* diminishes *me*, because I am involved in *Mankinde*; And therefore never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; It tolls for *thee*."

THE NEWS that an American company has already purchased the film rights of this book will make all film-makers, and not least the documentary people, sit up. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is as great a novel as *The Grapes of Wrath*; indeed some may think it greater. It is vividly pictorial, strong in character, truthful and living. In many ways one feels after reading it that one has seen a film—a film far finer and greater than any that has in reality reached the screen.

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* describes a very minor incident in the Spanish civil war. The hero is a young professor from the U.S.A. fighting on the side of the Government. He is sent through the Franco lines in order to join a band of guerilla fighters and to organise them, under his own leadership, in the blowing up of a road-bridge. This bridge is in itself only a minor episode in a complete scheme for an attack by the Government forces. The explosion has to be exactly timed to fit in with the plans of the general staff. The action of the story covers four days. Plans go wrong; the leader of the guerillas is weak and villainous; the Fascists are in pursuit. But the bridge is blown, although Jordan (the American) knows by now that the attack has been betrayed to the enemy and cannot succeed. We leave him, with a crushed leg, lying alone in the woods, and about to shoot, as a final gesture, the leader of a Fascist platoon which will then most certainly kill him.

Through all the suspense and excitement of these four days we get to know, with indescribable intimacy, all the members of the guerilla band. I have seldom read a novel in which the characters were so real. Perhaps Hemingway was able to achieve this reality because he felt passionately that they then, as we to-day, were ordinary common fighting people in a civil war. The Spanish war was to most of us the real turning-point of contemporary history; its hideous conclusion was the inevitable signal for a European Civil War which is still spreading. In his magnificent commentary to Ivens' documentary *Spanish Earth*, Hemingway showed that he well understood the issue, which was and is a simple one. Not one of prestige or power, but one of the inheritance of the good life; an issue which posed and poses only one simple question—are the people, the common, ordinary people, to inherit the earth and to order it in their own way?

So *For Whom the Bell Tolls* tells largely of the pure in heart. But it tells too of the intricacies and weaknesses of heart and head. Twists and corners in men's souls; loyalties misdirected; simplicity

confounded. The greatest merit of the book lies perhaps in Hemingway's lack of deliberate partisanship. He does not pretend that all the Republicans were perfect and all the Fascists villains. He is telling a tale about ordinary people, and it is as ordinary people that we meet them even in the committal of hideous atrocities. Read Pilar's description of what they did to the Fascist town council; it is a tale of sickening horror; but above all it makes clear how these things happen—the wine, the sweat, the gathering together of mass cruelty under the emotional stress of a great event—merely the muddle and vomiting at the end of a big drinking party translated into terms of life and death, with a man or woman with a love of pain thrown up to focus the evil and eternal forces. Read again the scene in the cave where the guerillas try to provoke their untrustworthy leader to an action for which they can justifiably kill him, and so ensure the safe carrying out of the plan. They are men with just and simple minds; their leader's mind is subtle and cunning. Insulted, he smiles; struck in the mouth, he smiles. He outwits them.

There are certain other points of importance. Firstly that Hemingway has evolved a remarkable language of his own which gives the full flavour of Spanish speech—its Castilian grace mingled with obscene objurgations. Secondly that an element of mysticism—entirely without any bogus qualities—pervades the book (Pilar's description of the odour of death is one of the most remarkable, and certainly one of the most terrifying pieces of writing in contemporary literature). Thirdly there is the love story; some have said that this is wrongly introduced, but I believe that Hemingway was right. In the tension of conflict, personal issues become violently important; a man and a woman come together under a compulsion which is the fruit of the hourly

uncertainty of living—and with this compulsion goes an increase in the tempo and the intensity of life which is both a reflection and a creation of the actual duties which the act of living imposes on us. All that may be said against the particular episode in question is what has been said many times before—that Hemingway is an irritating describer of the act of love. He redeems himself, however, in the final parting of the lovers, which is a pattern of deep and true nobility.

I believe that *For Whom the Bell Tolls* will prove to be one of the really great novels of the century. And the problem now arises—how is it going to be made into a film? The project is a challenge to studio and to documentary technique alike; it is indeed a challenge to the creative qualities of cinema, and will remain so even if the plan to film it be given up in despair.

From the documentary point of view any meditation on the filming of this book leads you to a consideration of documentary shortcomings—of how documentary to-day tends to be humane instead of human; of how the rich life of, say, *Housing Problems*, is being watered down to documentary clichés, accurate and, in a sense, true to life, but lacking the *real* spark of living. This lack of true and intense concentration on people *alive* is one of the movie's major faults, and films which avoid this lack are few. Dovshenko's *Earth*, Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath*, Pagnol's *La Femme du Boulanger*, Vigo's *Atalante*—these had it in some measure; so, too, in a degree, had *Kameradschaft*, *La Maternelle*, *The Road to Life* and *They Won't Forget*. But in general it is a thing lacking. And *For Whom the Bell Tolls* emphasises this lack, emphasises the fact that cinema is not only the youngest but also (as yet) the weakest of the arts. That is why all sincere film-makers must feel not merely moved but also challenged by Hemingway's book.

## BARRY DELMAINE

### Scenario Specialist and Director

Sc. 1.—L.S. Radio Luxemburg, Radio Normandy, Radio Lyons, The British Broadcasting Corporation, and The Windmill Theatre.

Author of the George Formby sponsored Radio programs, also dramatisations and adaptations. Author of the B.B.C. 'Afternoon Revues', and Song-scenas, Sketches and Lyrics for the Windmill Theatre.

CUT TO

Sc. 2.—M.S. Gaumont British Instructional Films Ltd. Formerly Chief Scenarist, and now . . .

CUT TO

Sc. 3.—C.U. Selwyn Films Ltd.

Scenario adviser on current productions

**FLAT 450, RUSSELL COURT, RUSSELL SQUARE, W.C.1**



## NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

✓ **Merchant Seamen.** Production: The Crown Film Unit. Direction: J. B. Holmes. Assistant: Ralph Elton. Photography: Chick Fowle. Editing: R. Q. McNaughton. Sound: Ken Cameron. Sets: Edward Carrick. 25 mins. Distribution: G.F.D.

IN THE MIDDLE of last summer the G.P.O. Film Unit had a completed cutting copy of a film called *Able Seamen*. Now, nine months later, we finally have *Merchant Seamen* from The Crown Film Unit and it is no thanks to the officials concerned if the film has not been ruined, as *Squadron 992* was, by this hold-up.

Luckily *Merchant Seamen* is far too good a film to be ruined by being held up. In fact, without quibbling, it is quite the best film the G.P.O. Film Unit ever made and I do not except *Night Mail* or *North Sea*. The maturity of Jack Holmes' direction comes, let us admit it to our shame, as quite a bit of a shock. There has never been in documentary before quite so good a handling of people, whether actors or real men in the street. All the scenes between sailors—whether the officers on deck or the seamen below, or in the seamen's mission, or in hospital, bear the stamp of the real thing—the sort of thing that we all thought John Ford had hit in *The Long Voyage Home* and, now that we have seen Holmes' film, know was not quite it. In all these sequences the photography, set construction, and performance of the people is absolutely first rate, but even more credit must go to Holmes for his handling of the people, and for his timing and camera movement which must have made the editing a joy and a labour of love to the cutter. There is a bare minimum of commentary: nine-tenths of the film is sync. stuff.

The story in essence is simply the life of merchant seamen; being wartime it happens that we are shown their life in wartime, but that is only the shell of the film. The important thing is the way they go about their job, the way they live below decks and the way they live on shore—the even monotony of their lives with the sudden dangers and calls for exertion, the intimacy of their contacts, both with their mates and with nature, and their quiet acceptance of their life as it is.

The film opens with a merchantman putting out to join a convoy. Before it can reach it it is torpedoed—this torpedoing is the most exciting sequence of any sea film, making the steam roller of *China Seas* look like a cissy. The men are picked up by a lifeboat and brought ashore, the injured taken to hospital whilst the others go the seamen's mission until they can find another ship. One of the injured youngsters decides to take a course in gunnery, and after the course is completed, joins a new ship in which he finds many of his old mates with whom he was torpedoed. Their ship sets out in a new

convoy and, after a night's anxiety in threading a dangerous way through a minefield in the fog, the youngster has the satisfaction of sinking a U-boat.

The film, as we said, is about seamen, and the war is only a background. But unfortunately, in two places, the film has been made to carry a message which has nothing to do with seamen, and is only concerned with war as such. These two sequences stick out like a couple of sore thumbs. They are a sequence where the youngster goes through his gunnery course, and the end of the film where a really magnificently built-up sequence of life below decks is ruined by the very perfunctory sinking of the U-boat. It seems obvious that the film must have had a very different ending at some time or other; and to judge from the quick mixes, unfortunately now with only commentary over, of the various groups of seamen with their cards or gramophone or watch repairs, this ending was in tone with the real theme of the film. But these unfortunate additions cannot in the end detract from the merit of Holmes' film. In it we can see, not the first, but certainly the most complete approach to fulfilment of the documentary idea which we all hope will be completely realised one day. One thing is certain, this film will go down like hot cakes with any British audience, and it deserves to. We can only hope that Holmes will be allowed to continue in the Crown Film Unit what he was able to begin in the G.P.O.

✓ **Adeste Fideles.** Production: Strand Film Co. for M.O.I. Producer: Basil Wright. Direction: Ralph Keene and Ralph Bond. Camera: Charles Marlborough and Gerald Gibbs. Musical Direction: Muir Mathieson. 14 minutes.

*Adeste Fideles* is richly set with scenes of Roman Catholic devotional duties. As I hold to no orthodox beliefs I cannot be entirely fair to it. Also I am prejudiced by recollections of treasons men have done in the name of God, yet I was moved by the sincerity of the film. In fact it concerns itself even more with showing something of the love and kindness underlying the tragic human scene than with the religious context. *Adeste Fideles* is about Christmas in war-ridden Britain. The documented scenes—other than those of intercession and worship—are of evacuated children, foster-parents, the Christmas hubbub outside Gamages, the toy counters in a store, safely high jinks in a pub, and Father Christmas picking up a wondering mite. Out of this material has come a beautiful and exceptional film. Direction and photography are of a particularly high order and, by the way, there is no commentary, which is a blessing.

Recently there seems to have been an increasing demand from one quarter or another for films concerned with human ideals. It has been variously

phrased and expressed, for clear definition of the need will probably only come when the need is met. The commercial cinema is already to some extent awake to it—witness such films as *Our Town*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *Love on the Dole*. You will find something of this new tide in cinema, in the treatment of the closely human themes of *Adeste Fideles*.

✓ **Malaria.** Production: Shell Film Unit. Producers: Arthur Elton and Graham Tharp. Special Effects: Francis Rodker. Micro-cinematography: Percy Smith and Sidney Beadle. 2½ reels. Distribution: Non-T.

THE SHELL FILM unit is to be congratulated for having made one of the best technical films to date. Malaria is by no means an easy subject to tackle; the disease is caused by a parasite with a complicated life cycle and is spread by several varieties of mosquitoes whose habits vary from one locality to another.

I do not know what type of audience the producers had in mind when the film was made, but there is no reason why any intelligent person should not understand and enjoy it. I could only find one gaffe—the statement that mosquito larvæ draw air into their lungs; neither larvæ nor adult insects have lungs. The life history of the parasite is admirably illustrated by Rodker's animated diagrams. Though there are three types of malarial parasite, the benign tertian, the quartan and the malignant tertian, for a simple explanation it was obviously best to show one only, as Elton and Tharp have done. If the three types had been shown and compared it would have been valuable for medical students but confusing for other types of audience. (Actually, the life history shown is a hybrid between the benign and malignant tertian types.)

The description of the parasite occupies the first part of the film, parts two and three dealing with the mosquito vector and malaria control. Except for the lapse already mentioned, Part 2 leaves nothing to be desired by anybody who is not an entomologist. Several close-ups of mosquitoes and their larvæ are shown, demonstrating oviposition by the adult female, and the distinctions between larvæ and adults of the species that carry malaria and those that do not. The taking of those pictures must have produced the usual headache of micro-cinematography—a strength of illumination adequate for a clear picture is likely to roast the star. With a creature like a mosquito or its larva, the problem must have been considerable. (For slow-moving organisms this difficulty can be overcome by taking single pictures at fairly long intervals, as was done by Canti in his micro-films.)

Part 3 gives admirable advice on the general

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hygienic measures for combating malaria. One cannot help smiling at the advice to build one's home in a healthy situation; most people would like to, but healthy sites are apt to be expensive. However, it is shown that malaria is a social problem that can only be finally solved on an international scale. It is pointed out that the anti-malarial measures in Malaya not only caused a fall in the mortality from this disease but from others as well. It is rather a pity that this point could not have been amplified; my guess would be that the general improvement in health was due to a reduction of intestinal infections, particularly in children. If this is so, it would not have taken very long to say it. The three parts of the film are shown with a clear break between each, a device that may disturb the aesthetes but which enhances the clarity of the exposition.

I should like to invite the Shell film unit to amplify this film slightly and to offer it to medical schools. It should meet with an appreciative reception, and I feel sure that the unit would be encouraged in future to make one version of their technical films for the general public, and an amplified version for specialised students. The producers have shown that there is no need to talk down to the layman; the only difference between the treatment given here, and that required by an audience of medical students is the incorporation of additional details.

A-Tish-Oo. Production: Verity Films for M.O.I.

Direction: Max Munden and J. Lewis. Camera: B. Browne. 5 minutes.

ONE OF THE major problems we're up against in this war is keeping clear of epidemics, particularly influenza epidemics. Factories working at full pressure, crowded trains and communal shelters all expose the public to this danger.

In this five-minute film the Ministry of Health has put forward one of its many anti-influenza suggestions, namely the wearing of a mask to protect the mouth and nose. (One would have thought that films on gargling and inoculation should come first.) Masks are made of paper, cloth or celluloid. If they are unobtainable a pocket handkerchief can be used. For long stretches of work in the factory, or long stretches of sleep in a public shelter, the idea seems sensible. But a mask apparently does not permit its wearer to eat, drink or smoke. So one man, at least, in the film, sitting alone in his office, and masked, Jesse James-like, with his handkerchief, seems to be putting himself to a lot of unnecessary inconvenience.

The opening of the film is bright and to the point. A worker sneezes over his lathe—a café proprietor sneezes over his cakes, and a cinema usherette sneezes over the audience. But these real people are soon whisked away and their places taken by a row of mannequins (photographed usually with vase of flowers) reminding one of the fashion parades of the weekly magazine films. There's one very neatly put analogy. A man sneezing out germs is compared with a

big gun firing out shells. A man sneezing is "frozen" on the screen so that we see the cloud of germ-carrying drops of moisture. This approach to the subject could have been followed further with advantage. One technical grouse—the background music is entirely unnecessary and at times extremely irritating.

Words for Battle. Production: Crown Film Unit. Direction: Humphrey Jennings. Commentary: Lawrence Olivier, M.O.I. 5 mins.

WORDS FOR BATTLE is an illustrated lantern-slide lecture, with Olivier's curate-like voice reverently intoning various extracts from poetry, verse and topical political speeches. That tough old republican revolutionary, Milton, rubs shoulders with minor Browning ("reeking into Cadiz Bay") and lesser Kipling. Winston Churchill with his "fight on the beaches" is elbowed out of the final pay-off by Lincoln in Gettysburg war-aims vein, and the whole is neatly rounded off by long-focus shots of groups of soldiers, sailors, airmen and women in uniform stepping gaily through the civilian crowds on the pavement. Altogether an extraordinary performance the effect of which on morale is quite incalculable. The man who must feel most out of place is poor old Handel. As he stood on his gaily coloured barge conducting the Water Music that was to bring him back into royal favour, he can hardly have guessed that it would come to this.

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# THE NATURE OF PROPAGANDA

Address delivered to the Canadian Club in Montreal, February 17th, 1941

by JOHN GRIERSON

## PART I

### Propaganda on the Offensive

LONG BEFORE the war started, those who had studied the development of propaganda were constantly warning the British Government that a highly organised Information Service, national and international, equipped with all modern instruments, was as necessary as any other line of defence. I am thinking back to 1930 and even before Hitler came to power. Over the dog days of the 30's they preached and they pleaded, with only the most partial success; and in the meantime the greatest master of scientific propaganda in our time came up. I don't mean Goebbels: I mean Hitler himself. In this particular line of defence called propaganda, we were caught bending as in so many other spheres, because peace was so much in peoples' hearts that they would not prepare the desperate weapons of war.

The Germans have attached first importance to propaganda. They don't think of it as just an auxiliary in political management, and military strategy. They regard it as the very first and most vital weapon in political management and military achievement—the very first. All of us now appreciate how the strategy of position—the war of trenches—was blown to smithereens by the development of the internal combustion engine. Fast moving tanks and fast troop carriers could get behind the lines. Aeroplanes and flying artillery could get behind the lines. War, in one of its essentials, has become a matter of getting behind the lines and confusing and dividing the enemy.

But the chief way of getting behind the lines and confusing and dividing the enemy has been the psychological way. Hitler was cocksure that France would fall and forecast it in 1934, almost exactly as it happened. The forecast was based on psychological not on military reasons. "France," he said, "in spite of her magnificent army could, by the provocation of unrest and disunity in public opinion, easily be brought to the point when she would only be able to use her army too late or not at all."

The theory behind all this is very simple. Men today, by reason of the great spread of education, are, in part at least, thinking beings. They have been encouraged in individual judgment by a liberal era. They have their own sentiments, loyalties, ideas and ideals; and these, for better or worse, determine their actions. They cannot be considered automata. If their mental and emotional loyalties are not engaged in the cause you present, if they are not lifted up and carried forward, they will fall down on you sooner or later when it comes to total war. The usual way of expressing it is to say that their morale will break.

That is why you have Hitler saying: "It is not arms that decide, but the men behind them—always"; or again, "Why should I demoralise the enemy by military means, if I can do so better or more cheaply in other ways?"; or again, "The place of artillery preparation and frontal attack by the infantry in trench warfare will in future be taken by propaganda; to break down the enemy psychologically before the armies begin to function at all . . . mental confusion, contradiction of feeling, indecisiveness, panic: these are our weapons. When the enemy is demoralised from within, when he stands on the brink of revolution, when social unrest threatens, that is the right moment. A single blow will destroy him."

Most of you have heard how the Germans, just before they entered Norway, arranged for the State dignitaries in Oslo a special showing of their film of the Polish campaign. You will see a portion of that film at the end of the American film *The Ramparts We Watch*. Even a portion of the film will give you some idea of the effect such a demonstration was likely to have on the peace-loving Norwegians. It showed the mass mechanical efficiency of German warfare with brutal candour. The roaring aeroplanes, the bursting bombs, the flame throwers, the swift unending passage of mechanised might all constituted an image of the inevitable.

That is how the strategy of terror works. It worked with us in England at the time of Munich. I won't say the men had the wind up—in fact I should describe the male reaction as one of vast disappointment and even shame—but the women were weeping all over the place. The picture of inevitable death and destruction Germany wished to present had been successfully presented; and it is one of the best evidences of British stamina that the new united courage of the British people has been welded so soon out of these disturbed and doubtful beginnings.

Terror is only one aspect of propaganda on the offensive. The thing works much more subtly than that. Here is a quotation from someone in Hitler's entourage to show how deadly the approach can be: "Every State can, by suitable methods, be so split from within that little strength is required to break it down. Everywhere there are groups that desire independence, whether national or economic or merely political. The scramble for personal advantage and distorted ambition: these are the unfailing means to a revolutionary weapon by which the enemy is struck from the rear. Finally, there are the business men, whose profits are their all in all. There is no patriotism that can hold out against all temptations. It is not difficult to find patriotic slogans that can cover all such enterprises."



We have seen in France how groups of men can, in the name of their country, give in to Hitler. Perhaps, in the name of France, they wished to crush the popular front and keep out socialism, but they gave in to Hitler. Perhaps, in the name of France, they wanted to crush capitalism in the name of socialism, but they gave in to Hitler. Perhaps, in the name of France, they sighed for some neo-medieval religious authoritarianism, but they gave in to Hitler.

In the United States the German inspired organisations do not trade as such. You will always find them under the slogan 'America first' and other banners of patriotism.

The principal point to take is that, when the Germans put propaganda on the offensive in war, their psychological opportunities are rich and widespread. They appeal to men's thwarted ambitions; they offer salvation to disappointed and disheartened minorities; they prey on the fears of capitalist groups regarding socialism; they preach controlled capitalism and a socialist state to the socialist minded. They harp on those weaknesses of democracy of which democratic citizens are only too well aware; the verbiage of its parliamentary debates, the everlasting delays of its committees, the petty bourgeois ineffectiveness of its bureaucracy. They probe the doubts in the mind of democracy and inflame them to scepticism. Everything is grist to their mill, so long as they divide the enemy and weaken his belief in himself. No one will say that German propaganda has not done that job brilliantly and well, as it has marched its way across Europe. It has found the population divided against itself and ready for the knife, and Laval and Quislings everywhere drilled and rehearsed perfectly in the act of capitulation.

So, you see, the Germans believe that Democracy has no genuine convictions for which people will be willing to stake their lives. They proceed cynically on that assumption, march on that assumption and their entire military plan depends on that assumption. Hanfstaengel actually declared at one time that this lack of conviction within democracy was Hitler's fundamental discovery—"the discovery which formed the starting point for his great and daring policies."

It is perhaps as well that we know where the heart of the matter lies, for if lack of conviction, as they say, always results in defeatism and defeat, the challenge is plain enough. It behoves us to match conviction with greater conviction and make the psychological strength of the fighting democracies shine before the world. It behoves us to match faith with greater faith and, with every scientific knowledge and device, secure our own psychological lines. If propaganda shows a way by which we can strengthen our conviction and affirm it more aggressively against the threat of an inferior concept of life, we must use it to the full, or we shall be robbing the forces of democracy of a vital weapon for its own security and survival. This is not just an idea; it is a practical issue of modern scientific warfare.

## PART II

### Relativity in Propaganda

PROPAGANDA on the offensive is, like every weapon of war, a cold-blooded one. Its only moral is that the confusion and defeat of the enemy are the supreme good. In that sense it is a black art and in the hands of the Germans has been a diabolical one. But, objectively speaking, you will appreciate that it depends for its success on a deep study of the psychological and political divisions of the enemy and is therefore based on close and scientific analysis. Catch-as-catch-can methods in propaganda can no longer serve against an enemy so thorough.

The more pleasant side of international propaganda is the positive side, where you ingratiate yourself with other countries; where you state your cause, establish alliance in spirit and create world confidence that the issue and the outcome are with you. That has been England's great task over the past few months, particularly since the fall of France and particularly in the regard to the Americas.

England's method derives from her great liberal tradition. She is not, I am afraid, very scientific; but she does believe, out of her liberal tradition, that telling the truth must command goodwill everywhere and, in the long run, defeat the distortions and boastings and blatancies of the enemy. The Germans believe that men are essentially weak; they believe that the mainsprings of action are primarily economic and selfish; they believe that men are more interested in the élan vital than the élan morale; and they derive the principles of their propaganda accordingly. The English still believe in the élan morale and hope that an appeal to the Platonic principle of justice will triumph.

I won't say England tells the whole truth but I think that most detached observers agree that she tells as much of it as she reasonably can. The accent of honesty and forthrightness is her principal suit. You never find the B.B.C.—you certainly never find Winston Churchill—under-rating the dangers and difficulties which beset the country. Germany cannot get out of her make-up an element of boasting; and Mussolini, at least till recently, was the image of braggadocio. The English quality, and it has the mark of a national talent, is under-statement; and in the long run—if there is a long run—it is strangely penetrating and effective.

If England has a fault, it is that she is still the proud old nation, so sure of her cause and of her good spirit that she takes it too much for granted that other nations will immediately recognise them. You remember what we used to say about British salesmanship. The British said in effect: "Our articles are articles of quality; they have the best craftsmanship in the world behind them and, word of an Englishman, you can take our word for it." It was all very true but down in South America and elsewhere, there were other habits of mind and other habits of buying and the Englishman never quite got round to studying the other fellow's point of view and the special requirements of the market.

He certainly never quite got round to saying "The client is always right."

Propaganda, some of us believe, is like selling or showmanship, a study of relativity. I don't mean that it must always, like the chameleon, take its colour from the country or the community in which it is operating. It is the German style to be, cynically, all things to all men, and that is the essence of the German doctrine; but it is not the English. At the same time, a study of the other fellow's point of view is essential.

We used to argue a good deal in peace-time England about the policy of the British Council for Cultural Relations Abroad. There were two schools of thought. One school had not yet got away from the idea that the one way to present England abroad was to show the Horse Guards Parade and the ceremonies of old England, Oxford and the law courts, Ascot and Canterbury, the green lawns of the cathedral towns and the lovely rustic quiet of the shires. It was difficult to quarrel with things so fine; but others said plainly: "No, there is a world without, which wants to know more than that. You have a responsibility before the world, in terms of modern leadership, modern ideas and modern achievements. The world wants to know how up-to-date and forward looking you are. It wants to see the light of the future in your eyes as well as the strength and dignity of your past. It wants to know what you are doing to deserve your privileged position in the world; and God keep you if you do not answer them."

If you examine British propaganda today, you will find that there are still the two schools of thought, and I am glad to say that, as the battle of Britain has developed, the younger school has been winning hands down. Never, in a sense, was England a more modern, revitalised, forward looking country than she is today. Every week sees changes and forward steps. Most of you will have caught a sense of those changes in the Radio Newsreel, in the dropping of the lackadaisical B.B.C. voices, the participation of ordinary men and the participation of men who have done things or are doing things. You get it in the development of the Yorkshireman Priestley as a broadcaster. His is not the courtly voice but the voice, so much closer to the real heart of England, of deep, obstinate common sense. You find the change in the fact that they use Canadian voices today to speak to Canada and American voices to speak to the United States.

England is beginning to see that accents and styles count in propaganda and that every country has its own way of thinking and its own special focus of interest. "Other nations," says Wickham Steed, "are not interested to hear what good people we are or how excellent our intentions may be. They are interested in what is going to happen to themselves and it should be the business of our propaganda to make this clear to them."

On this question of international differences, I received a letter recently from England from someone who had seen our Canadian films. He said, was it possible that Canadians thought



faster than Englishmen. I replied that when it is a problem of thinking in a straight line, Canadians think much faster; but that when it comes to thinking in five concentric circles, the Englishmen are undoubtedly the best. Our policy, however, when we send Canadian films abroad is to invite the countries receiving them to remake them in their own style and use their own editorial comment. It sounds curious but there are really vast differences of mental approach as between ourselves and England. There is even a vast difference of approach as between New Zealand and Australia. He is a very optimistic propagandist who thinks he can pen a message or strike a style which can be called international.

I think most of you will have seen *London Can Take It*. It was a beautiful film but it raises another very special issue of relativity in propaganda. That is the difference between primary effects and secondary effects. You might call it the difference between conscious and sub-conscious effects. *London Can Take It* created enormous sympathy for England and so far so good. The question is whether creating sympathy necessarily creates confidence. I am going to leave you to work out that psychological problem for yourselves. I only cite it to indicate that in the art of propaganda many deep considerations have to be taken into account. Short range results are not necessarily long range successes. Conscious effects may not necessarily engage the deeper loyalties of the sub-conscious. In propaganda you may all too easily be here today and gone tomorrow.

All in all, however, one may be proud of many things in England's Information Service. It has followed its own native light and no one will say it has not been a noble light. It has not been scientific, but neither has it been cynical. To its scientific critics it has said with Sir Philip Sidney "If you will only look in thy heart and write, all will be well". I am of the scientific school myself and would leave less to chance in a hard and highly mobilised world. But no one will deny that at least half the art of propaganda lies in the ultimate truth that truth will ultimately conquer.

For myself, I watch the German procedure and wish a little sometimes that we could, without running over into harshness and blatancy, brag a little more about ourselves and put our propaganda more plainly on the offensive. They have flooded the world with pictures of action, of their young troops on the march and going places, of deeds done. I confess I hate to see them getting away with it.

The Germans have, in their pictures to America, laid a special emphasis on youth and efficiency and, to peoples starved of belief in the future, they have drummed away with their idea of a new world order. They have most subtly shown great respect in their presentation of their French and English prisoners of war and emphasised the model discipline of their troops in occupied territories. They have most carefully presented the Führer as a gentle and simple soul, weeping over his wounded soldiers,

kind to children, humble in his triumphs. It is a calculated, impressive and positive picture as they present it.

The Germans' careful study of the requirements of particular countries must have had particular effect in South America. They have appreciated the South American objection to being exploited by alien capital and have posed carefully as the outside friend who wished nothing so much as to help them be themselves and develop themselves. They have known how to pump in free news services to countries which appreciated them—by radio from Berlin, translated and typed out and put pronto on the editorial desk by local German agents. On the special national days of these countries to the South, they have known how to shoot flattering broadcasts from Berlin, in the language of the country and with the fullest knowledge of the local vanities to be flattered.

The Germans have known better than to say, as a certain well-known American said of cultural relations with South America, that "the idea was to spread the American idea to the South American Republics". I have no doubt he thought the American idea God's own blessing to mankind, but it is worth remembering that not a few South Americans, allied to a more aristocratic and courtly tradition, still regard the American idea as the ultimate in barbarism—or as a French jester has put it, an idea "which has passed from barbarism to degeneracy without any intervening period of civilisation". The Germans certainly know better than to define their interest in South America with the naïveté of an advertisement in Time. "Southward", it declares, in a phrase which will raise every hackle South of the Rio Grande, "Southward, lies the course of Empire".

Where the Germans fail is in the fact that their cold-blooded cynicism spills over and is spotted. You can impress other countries with your might and your will. You may even impress them with your new world order. But you can't start blatantly talking of conscience as a chimera; morals as an old wives' tale; the Christian religion as a dream of weaklings; and the pursuit of truth as bourgeois fiddle-faddle, without raising a few doubts in the heart of mankind.

### PART III

#### Democracy's Special Need of Propaganda

FINALLY, there is propaganda within our gates. I suggested earlier that faith must be met with greater faith and that our first line of defence is in the unity of our purpose in these ideological struggles which are now upon us. It would be ignominious if, in spite of the bravery and sacrifice by land and sea and air, Hitler's terrible dictum were to prove right: that democracy has no convictions for which it will fight to the end—that it is divided in interest and idea—that, divisible, it can be defeated. The challenge to us is very plain. It is to discover within ourselves a singleness, surety and unity of purpose which will defy all ideological enticement and temptation. It is the function of propaganda to ensure this result within our gates.

A democracy by its very nature and by its very virtues lies wide open to division and uncertainty. It encourages discussion; it permits free criticism; it opens its arms wide to the preaching of any and every doctrine. It guards jealously this liberty of the individual, for it is of the essence of democracy and, in the long run, makes for justice and civilisation. But in times of stress it is difficult to see the wood for the trees. Whilst we are consulting this freedom and that, we may lose that discipline, that centralised power and dynamic, by which the principle of liberty itself is safeguarded from those who are less punctilious. When we are challenged in our philosophy and our way of life, as we are today, the beginning is not in the word but in the act.

The Nazi viewpoint is that we have not found within our democratic way of life a sufficient dynamic of action to meet their challenge—that it is not in our nature to find it—and that we shall not find it. "The opposition," says Hitler, "is dismally helpless, incapable of acting, because it has lost every vestige of an inner law of action."

In the long run they will find that is not true but it would be folly for us to dismiss this criticism without thinking about it. All of us know that the self-respect of free men provides the only *lasting* dynamic in human society and if you want to see the most powerful and vivid statement of this proposition I recommend you to read again Walt Whitman's preface to his *Leaves of Grass*. But we also know that free men are relatively slow in the up-take in the first days of crisis. We know that much that has become precious to free men in a liberal régime must be forsworn in these days of difficulty—the luxury of private possession and private security—the luxury of private deviation in thought and action—the supreme luxury of arguing the toss. Moreover, your individual trained in a liberal régime demands automatically that he be *persuaded* to his sacrifice. It may sound exasperating but he demands as of right—of human right—that he come in only of his own free will.

All this points to the fact that instead of propaganda being less necessary in a democracy, it is more necessary. In the authoritarian State you have powers of compulsion and powers of repression, physical and mental, which in part at least take the place of persuasion. Not so in a democracy. It is your democrat who most needs and demands guidance from his leaders. It is the democratic leader who most must give it. If only for the sake of quick decision and common action, it is democracy for which propaganda is the more urgent necessity.

There is another deep reason for the development of propaganda in a democracy. You know how the educational beliefs of democracy have been criticised. "Universal education," say the Nazis, "is the most corroding and disintegrating poison that liberalism ever invented for its own destruction." This, of course, is another distortion, but there is again a grain of truth. With universal education, democracy has set itself an enormous and an enormously difficult task. We have had it for two or three generations

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only; and it would be crazy to think that in that short experience we had worked out a perfect technique or discovered all the principles by which it should be guided. Our system of universal education has made vast mistakes and has today grotesque weaknesses. Every progressive educationist knows that. This does not mean that we must throw the essential machinery of democracy into the discard, but rather that we must correct its mistakes and strengthen it where it is now weak.

There are some of us who believe that propaganda is the part of democratic education which the educators forgot; and that is what first attracted us to study its possibilities. Education has always seemed to us to ask too much from people. It has seemed to expect every citizen to know everything about everything all the time—a patent impossibility in a world which grows wider and more complicated every day. We believe that education has concentrated so much on people knowing things that it has not sufficiently taught them to feel things. It has given them facts but has not sufficiently given them faith. It has given them the three R's but has not sufficiently given them that fourth R which is Rooted Belief. We believe that education in this essential has left men out in the bush without an emotional map to guide them; and when men are starved of belief they are only too prone to believe anything.

If you recall the origin of the word propaganda, you will remember that it was first associated with the defence of a faith and a concept of civilisation. Propaganda first appeared

in the description of the Catholic office—Congregatio de Propaganda Fide—which was to preach and maintain the faith. It may be just as easily today the means by which we preach and maintain our own democratic faith. Man does not live by bread alone, nor the citizen by mind alone. He is a man with vanities to be appealed to, a native pride to be encouraged. He has a gambler's heart to be allowed a flutter and a fighting instinct which can be associated with fighting for the right. One part of him at least asks to live not safely but adventurously.

So we may usefully add a new dramatic factor to public education—an uplifting factor which associates knowledge with pride and private effort with a sense of public purpose. We can, by propaganda, widen the horizons of the schoolroom and give to every individual, each in his place and work, a living conception of the community which he has the privilege to serve. We can take his imagination beyond the boundaries of his community to discover the destiny of his country. We can light up his life with a sense of active citizenship. We can give him a sense of greater reality in the present and a vision of the future. And, so doing, we can make the life of the citizen more ardent and satisfactory to himself.

We can, in short, give him a leadership of the imagination which our democratic education has so far lacked. We can do it by radio and film and half a dozen other imaginative media; but mostly, I hope, we shall do it by encouraging men to work and fight and serve in common for

the public good. To have men participate in action is the best of all propagandas; and radio and films and the rest of them are only auxiliary to that.

I had hoped to make some conclusion regarding what might be done here in Canada, but that is a whole subject in itself. I shall in conclusion only say this. Canada is a young nation which has not yet found herself but is today in the exciting process of doing so. I like to think that the breathless reception given to the King and Queen was due not so much to their presence, brilliant as it was, but to the fact that Canada found for the first time a ceremonial opportunity of raising her young national face to the sunlight. I like to think that sub-conscious Canada is even more important than conscious Canada and that there is growing up swiftly in this country, under the surface, the sense of a great future and of a great separate destiny—as Canada.

In other words, I believe this country is ripe, if its imagination is given true leadership, for a new burst of energy and a new expression of Canada's faith in herself. In these circumstances, I don't think it would be difficult to create a powerful sense of spiritual unity, whatever the threat may be. In a recent sketch, Morley Callaghan makes his Canadian say to the Fascist bully, "Out of the way Big Boy! I'm on my way". Encouraged in what she potentially and deeply is, Canada, like every democracy, may yet make her greatest of all contributions to victory. I want to emphasise: it will be a psychological contribution. It will be the priceless gift of unity and conviction in the cause she now serves.

## DOCUMENTARY AND OTHER BOOKINGS FOR MAY

(The following bookings for May are selected from a list covering its Members, supplied by The News and Specialised Theatres Association)

| Week ending                                     |      | Week ending                                     |      | Week ending                                     |      |
|---|------|---|------|---|------|
| Action on Ice                                   |      | March of Time, No. 12—6th Year                  |      | Television Preview                              |      |
| The Tatler News Theatre, Birmingham             | 24th | The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne             | 31st | The News Theatre, Nottingham                    | 24th |
| A Job to be Done                                |      | The Cosmo Cinema, Glasgow                       | 31st | Tennyson's Land of Lyonesse                     |      |
| The News Cinema, Aberdeen                       | 10th | Medico  |      | The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne             | 17th |
| The Tatler Theatre, Manchester                  | 24th | The News Theatre, Leeds                         | 17th | The Hidden Master                               |      |
| The News Theatre, Leeds                         | 31st | The Tatler Theatre, Manchester                  | 24th | The Tatler Theatre, Chester                     | 17th |
| An Inland Port                                  |      | Moments of Charm                                |      | The Red Cross in Action                         |      |
| The Tatler Theatre, Manchester                  | 24th | The News Theatre, Manchester                    | 17th | The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne             | 10th |
| Atlantic Patrol                                 |      | Mystic Siam                                     |      | The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne | 10th |
| The News Theatre, Nottingham                    | 17th | The News Theatre, Manchester                    | 24th | This is Poland                                  |      |
| Beating the Blitz                               |      | One Against the World                           |      | The News Theatre, Nottingham                    | 24th |
| The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne             | 24th | The News Theatre, Nottingham                    | 31st | Threads of a Nation                             |      |
| Charlie Chaplin—Hot Dogs                        |      | Point of View, No. 9—Man or Machine             |      | The News Theatre, Nottingham                    | 31st |
| The News Cinema, Aberdeen                       | 17th | The News Theatre, Nottingham                    | 17th | Treacherous Waters                              |      |
| Coastal Defence                                 |      | The Tatler Theatre, Manchester                  | 17th | The Tatler Theatre, Manchester                  | 10th |
| The News Theatre, Leeds                         | 17th | Raising Sailors                                 |      | Tropical Springtime                             |      |
| The Tatler Theatre, Manchester                  | 24th | The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne             | 17th | The News Cinema, Aberdeen                       | 17th |
| Fitness Wins Series—No. 4                       |      | The News Theatre, Bristol                       | 17th | Ulster  |      |
| The News Cinema, Aberdeen                       | 31st | Religion and the People                         |      | The Tatler Theatre, Manchester                  | 17th |
| Forty Million People                            |      | The News Cinema, Aberdeen                       | 24th | Village in India                                |      |
| The News Theatre, Nottingham                    | 31st | River Thames                                    |      | The Tatler Theatre, Chester                     | 17th |
| Furnaces of Industry                            |      | The News Theatre, Birmingham                    | 24th | The News Theatre, Bristol                       | 17th |
| The News Theatre, Leeds                         | 24th | Romance of Digestion                            |      | War Front                                       |      |
| Historic Virginia                               |      | The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne             | 24th | The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne             | 17th |
| The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne             | 31st | Romance of the Potato                           |      | Washington Parade                               |      |
| Islands of the West Indies                      |      | The Tatler Theatre, Chester                     | 24th | The News Theatre, Manchester                    | 24th |
| The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne | 31st | Savoy in the Alps                               |      | Western Waterway                                |      |
| Live Stocktaking                                |      | The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne | 24th | The Tatler Theatre, Manchester                  | 31st |
| The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne             | 17th | Sport of Kings                                  |      | White Battle Front                              |      |
| Mandarin Road to China                          |      | The News Theatre, Leeds                         | 10th | The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne | 24th |
| The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne             | 31st | The News Cinema, Aberdeen                       | 24th | White Wings                                     |      |
| Many Waters                                     |      | Stranger than Fiction                           |      | The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne | 10th |
| The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne             | 31st | The News Cinema, Aberdeen                       | 24th | Wings of Youth                                  |      |
| March of Time No. 11—America Speaks Her Mind    |      | The News Theatre, Leeds                         | 24th | The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne             | 10th |
| The News Theatre, Nottingham                    | 10th | Stranger than Fiction, No. 83                   |      | Yellow Caesar                                   |      |
| The News Cinema, Aberdeen                       | 17th | The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne | 10th | The Tatler Theatre, Manchester                  | 10th |
| March of Time, No. 12                           |      | Stranger than Fiction, No. 84                   |      |   |      |
| The Tatler Theatre, Manchester                  | 31st | The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne | 24th |   |      |



## TWO FILMS OF THE MONTH

### ✓ MAJOR BARBARA — LOVE ON THE DOLE ✓

HERE ARE TWO British films. One took a year and a half to make. The other took three months. One cost about £300,000; the other £30,000. One had all the ballyhoo possible; the other was made quietly and unpretentiously. Both are films of old plays.

It is pleasant in some ways that the film, small in time and money, takes the laurels, but it is sad about *Major Barbara*. It is an extremely well-made film, technically comparable to any from any country, with all the polish that a quarter of a million and a year and a half can give. It is also full of humour, but the one amazing thing is that basically the film is about nothing at all. The criticisms in the trade and national papers have hopped about trying to find the hidden subtleties. One even says, "The story is so complex and yet so obvious, that no attempt has been made or will be made to trace it in full here. The general effect is what really matters."

Possibly, everyone is over-estimating Mr. Shaw's film. Maybe it is not the deep social document that it is supposed to be. Possibly it is just another conventional play put into rather peculiar surroundings. It certainly has the old "boy meets girl"—"boy loses girl"—"boy gets girl". But not quite. There is no boy and there is no girl. There are no people in the film at all. There are images that use a language similar in some ways to ours. They even look vaguely like people, but they are not quite. The nearest you could say they come to life is that they are ghosts from 1905. In 1905 when *Major Barbara* was first released, it most likely caused a lot of excitement, but to-day the things that it is about are passed, and passed so completely that the film is neither a good old pot-boiler nor a film about people that mean something.

It is a pity. It is more than a pity. It is a bloody shame. I feel strongly about *Major Barbara*. After the good start of *Pygmalion* I looked forward with pleasure towards the next, and here we have it—a completely unintelligible two-hour film. If it had cost a tenth of what it did, if it had been made in a couple of months, it might be excused; but this is one of our industry's prestige films, and it could have meant so much to us just now when the film industry is on the point of closing down. This film had the industry's best technicians, knowledge and skill poured into it for more than a year; it had Britain's best actors and actresses on tap by the score; it had production money, always so scarce, splashed all over the place, and the result is a more or less straight photograph of an old and meaningless play, with our actors and actresses over-acting, and whining in what in Hungary is supposed to be Cockney.

There is no harm in spending a quarter of a million and a year and a half and a lot of people's work and knowledge, but how seldom have films made like this justified the effort. It is possible to spend that amount of time, labour and material on a film, but the usual story is that someone has

just gone wild, and the rich resources of people and material are being wasted. We have seen it so often in England. The first film fairly cheap, fairly quick, and fairly successful. The second film absurdly expensive, absurdly long and . . . well, I won't say it. I do not know what the answer is—maybe the producers should be banned from any public place except the four-ale bar, not allowed to see any write-ups, and have a man following them round saying "You're lousy," "It stinks," "My God, it's awful." Something is necessary to stop the wasting of as good film-making resources as there are in the world, by people lacking in strength to carry the thing through sensibly and sincerely.

A more cheerful story is *Love on the Dole*. My first reaction when I heard that the story had finally passed the censor, and was going to be made, was why should anyone take a topical 1934 play and film it in the middle of the war? I went to the trade show sceptically. But out of an old and somewhat out-of-date play, John Baxter has made a film that will hold its own for many years to come; for it is a film about people, real people who tell their own story, not ghosts lisping vague comments on what seems to some our misbegotten civilisation.

Despite two or three melodramatic incidents not added by the film makers; despite the agitator in the riot sequence added by the film makers, I imagine, to get the film past the censor, *Love on*

*the Dole* is a landmark in British films or in films of any country. It is in the same class as *The Grapes of Wrath*. The one criticism is that the subject is a period piece. What John Baxter and the technicians want next is an English Steinbeck. The direction of actors is what documentary directors have been trying for years. There have been some successes, but nearly all were achieved with ordinary people playing their own parts. To make people out of actors is the next thing to a miracle. We have seen nearly all *Love on the Dole's* actors and actresses in similar parts before, but you will never recognise them as the same people. The father, George Carney, takes the laurels. He has two difficult scenes—when he throws his son out, and when he throws his daughter out. Practically everyone who has a father has seen him get in that terrifying emotional state when he loses control, and becomes powerful and vicious on top, and weak and almost tearful underneath. To do this, and do it again in different terms, is as great a feat as a director and an actor can pull off, and John Baxter and George Carney have certainly done it. One false move would have ruined either sequence. A slight over-playing and all would have been lost, but twice you sit tight and feel as bad as if it were your own father again. The other players are excellent. Deborah Kerr, Maire O'Neill, Geoffrey Hibbert—all of them, but I think Mr. Baxter should have two-thirds of the credit.

So the film industry re-enacts the parable of the talents. It doesn't quite follow the original but the continuity is roughly the same. All I want to know is where is the master who will turn the unfaithful servant "into outer darkness"? Maybe the unfaithful servant has turned himself out.

## STANLEY IRVING.

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## FILM SOCIETY NEWS

Ayrshire held its last two meetings of the season on March 9th and 23rd, when the following programmes were shown: March 9th, *Accord Final*, *Shadow on the Stream*, *Dai Jones* and two coloured films *Alice in Switzerland* and *Peasant Island*. March 23rd, *Rembrandt* (revival) and *Kermesse Héroïque* (revival).

The Secretary of the Belfast Society writes: "Our financial state remains very precarious and still obliges us to work show by show. We seem to have reached our maximum audiences at a number just a little too low to give us sufficient security to book ahead. Our fourth show of the season was on the 25th of February. Our main film was *Katia*, accompanied by a very satisfactory group of shorts—a Disney, a Mary Field, Lotte Reiniger's *Harlequin* and Eisenstein's *Death Day*. The two latter were especially liked. After some hesitation we put on a fifth show. This time the feature was Duvivier's *L'Homme du Jour*. The shorts were another Mary Field, *Violons d'Ingres* (which was a little difficult owing to absence of English sub-titles and made more difficult because our sound projection is not quite good enough to make French easy to follow), and Len Lye's *Musical Poster No. 1*—which as we expected was a tremendous success. The only complaint was that we only ran it through once. If we find on completing our accounts that we have not lost too much of our exiguous balance we hope to put on a sixth show at the end of April. As far as we can review it our situation seems to be this. For a variety of reasons we have lost a large number of our pre-war members. We are compelled, therefore, to rely to a great extent on the sale of guest tickets and Forces tickets. But a large number of these are bought, as it were, spasmodically, for it is much cheaper, if one intends to come to the whole series, to takeout membership. This floating attendance, we find, depends largely on the usual box-office attractions of a star or, to a less extent, a director. For this reason we cannot risk at present the rather heavy losses we incurred last season on films more out of the ordinary than our usual run of features this season. To compensate for this we are trying especially hard now to put on attractive shorts."

The Glasgow Branch of the Scottish Churches Film Guild, in addition to the usual monthly review of religious films, has conducted during the past month a course for Sunday School Teachers in Glasgow on how to operate cine-projectors.

The course which was moderately well attended was in four parts. The first was theoretical and dealt with all aspects of projection; and the second, practical, when each person attending the course had the opportunity of operating the following three machines of dif-

ferent types—Gebescope "L" Model (Sound), Kodascope and Siemens (silent). The Chairman of the Branch, Mr. Neil H. Munn, B.Sc., conducted the course, and had the assistance of Mr. R. G. Gillies, M.A., and Mr. Isaac of the L.M.S. Rly. Co. The Guild will continue the reviewing of religious films during May and June.

The Cambridge Film Society reports: "The Cambridge University Film Society is in the throes of being anxious about the local licensing of *Zéro de Conduite*, which, along with *Tell Me If It Hurts*, *A Trip to Davy Jones' Locker*, *Fox Hunt*, *Colour Box*, a Robert Benchley and a 1914 Chaplin, they hope to show on May 18th.

## SCIENTIFIC FILM SOCIETIES

A record audience of over 500 members and guests attended the concluding show of the second season of the Aberdeen Scientific Film Club on Sunday April 20th. This audience exceeded the capacity of its usual meeting place so the club took a local cinema for the occasion. The films shown were a G.B.I. *Secrets of Life* film dealing with lupins, and *The Birth of a Baby*. Although now passed for public showing in Aberdeen, this film did not at first find favour with the authorities. The film was introduced by Prof. Dugald Baird, Professor of Midwifery in the University, who described it as an excellent advertisement for marriage, and stressed the need of ante-natal care.

On this occasion the club, in addition to allowing each member to bring a guest, invited a number of prominent local educationalists, civic dignitaries, members of the medical profession, etc. The acceptance of these invitations was ready and encouraging, and it is hoped that as a result the club will succeed in making its activities known to an even wider public. As it is the membership rose from 130 in the first season to 250 in the second.

Ayrshire now has a Scientific Film Society with a membership which already exceeds one hundred. In its initial stages it was sponsored by the Ayrshire Film Society, but it is now running as an independent organisation. The Secretary is Dr. G. Dunlop, of the Hannah Research Institute, and the council includes Mr. D. Welsh (Secretary of the Local Educational Film Association) and Mr Paton Walker (Secretary of the Ayrshire Film Society and Chairman of the Scottish Federation of Film Societies).

The Glasgow Scientific Film Society, although

They have tried wherever possible to have the directors of the pictures they are showing, to write programme notes on their own films—not so much as appreciations of the films, as short essays on their making. Another idea is to print, side by side, opposing views on the same film. Contributors include Dilys Powell, Caroline Lejeune, Basil Wright, Ian Coster, Ralph Keene and Grahame Tharp.

The Manchester Film Institute Society reports that recent shows included *Northern Outpost*, *Love on the Range*, *Chaplin's First Films*, and *Quai des Brumes—Swinging the Lambeth Walk*, *Five Faces*, *Graf von Carabas*, and *Les Otages—Moose Hunters*, *The Catch of the Season*, *Lofoten*, and *Ils Etaient Neuf Célibataires*.

A further three shows are being arranged at monthly intervals at which it is hoped to show *Le Roi S'Amuse*, *La Grande Illusion*, and *Retour de l'Aube*. It is also hoped to hold a sub-standard film show sometime in June.

still young and in process of building up its various activities, has had a most successful season. Membership figures are high, and are increasing; applications for membership are still coming in; so that the prospects for the Autumn Season are already more than promising. Mrs. Ockrent, the Secretary, reports: "Our Experimental Group is now rapidly organising itself and we have on the newly-formed Committee several people already well known in the amateur film world. As soon as the equipment and other technicalities have been arranged, production on films will commence. There is great enthusiasm for this new Group, and we hope very shortly to present to our members interesting films made and created by scientists themselves in their own laboratories."

"We are also forming a Critical Panel which will review films and arrange them in graded lists. These lists should be of great value to Scientific Film Societies generally, and assist Selection Committees in the task of arranging a programme enjoyable to all."

The formation of the Critical Panel is a step which was recommended in these columns and which will be heartily welcomed by all other societies which are working on the same lines.

The London Scientific Film Society held its last performance of the season on the 26th April with a programme on Planning for the Community. This included films on agricultural science as well as those dealing with aspects of slum conditions and the answer to the housing problem aided by modern scientific knowledge. *The City*—a film dealing with American city organisation—was well received, and Miss Elizabeth Denby, housing consultant, gave a short address in the interval.



## CORRESPONDENCE

### ARE ACTORS NECESSARY?

SIR: I began my film education by a study of Russian epics of fifteen years ago—*Fall of St. Petersburg, Ten Days that Shook the World*, and that sort of thing—and then lost my way and ended up in a commercial studio at Elstree. There they taught me all the professional tricks and I stayed put, and I became known as "Wrong Way" Lee, because I had started out to be a non-commercial documentary film director and ended up facing the box-office.

It had all begun somewhere in 1928 when I met John Grierson, who had just made a glorious film of the fishing fleet. What I saw confirmed what I had thought after seeing those amazing peasant players in the Russian films. I told myself: "The stage actor is as out of place in films as an overdressed woman in a nudist colony. The real film players are the non-professionals, like the peasants in *Fall of St. Petersburg* and the fishermen in Grierson's picture." I've been stunned by the realism in those films, a realism quite impossible with professional players.

I transformed those thoughts into action and made a film entitled *The Night Patrol*, a story of the down-and-outs of London. The police opposed me, the censors threatened; Bernard Shaw helped and applauded. The film was made without one professional actor. The press praised it to the skies.

One of the players held up shooting for five days while he worked off a short stretch in the "pen". Another ruined a sequence by shaving off his beard and buying a new suit out of his first pay. They were the real thing all right.

I proved that non-professional players could beat the trained people when it came to realism. In that film I presented stark emotions, portrayed by men and women who had lived them. It tore your guts out to watch them.

During the making of the film I proved my point, that a director could go into the streets, along the highways, the alleys, into the lanes and the fields, in search of film actors and find them. All that was needed for success was sympathetic direction plus simplicity, realism, and down-to-earthiness in the material they were asked to interpret. One of my down-and-out actors joined the ranks of the professionals, but the studio directors taught him to overact and he died in his shoes.

Determined to develop my theories about the non-professional player, I sought the opportunity to make *Song of London*, a picture of the Metropolis from dawn to midnight. I used only men, women and children of the streets. The press were once again enthusiastic in their praise. My main experiments ended here, because I went to Elstree and professionalism. Only once did I get a chance to take a camera into the streets—for a Bulldog Drummond picture—and I brought back some shots which were very gratifying. The scenes were impromptu, written, acted, and

directed wherever the surroundings inspired us. The players were the people of London, taking their Sunday morning stroll; unaware they were going to be filmed till they were politely asked if they would care to "act for the talkies, thank you very much".

More than ever I want to direct non-theatrical films with non-theatrical players. I know what wonderful results can be obtained; and how true cinematic performances are only possible by turning one's back on convention, suppressing theatricalism, throwing out the tricks and the fake, sweeping away the professionalism which has been clogging the wheels of film progress for 20 years. My twelve years in commercial studios taught me plenty, but not the art of the documentary film maker. And I believe there is a lot to learn. In the first instance I should have to use my instinct. After that, I hope I could learn from the experts of the game, and I'd be a most enthusiastic pupil.

I know that each day is bringing us nearer to the time when film propaganda will be recognised—and used—as the heaviest and deadliest gun in our armament. When that time comes the documentary people will be in the front line. I'd like to be there with them, helping.

In Wardour Street they used to sneer at the short film makers. That was before they knew there was going to be a war—or pictures like *Britain Can Take It, Men of the Lightship*, and *North Sea*. I felt sorry about it. I'd seen a few "shorts" that had more art and intelligent entertainment in them than any 50 box office epics.

Well, the day of the shorts is dawning rapidly. The Ministry of Information is putting them in the news—making the public shorts minded; introducing the non-professional players to the professional screen. The former are making good. Where are the studio trained players who can beat the men of Major MacDonald's lightship film? Or those *For Freedom*—blokes? Remember Captain Dove?

When the major film makers forget how films are made and start all over again, the screen will begin to live.

14 Parkfields,  
Welwyn Garden City,  
Herts.

Yours etc.,  
NORMAN LEE

SIR: We read that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine that never went astray, and I think I may say that Mr. Lee can expect the sort of reception reserved only for lost sheep, when he comes back into the fold to which he has been so long a stranger.

I was glad to see that he does much in his short article to force home the very points that I tried to make in my own inadequate survey. For example, when he says that "the stage actor is as

out of place in films as an overdressed woman in a nudist colony", I quite agree with him. But surely the question we were attempting to answer is not whether a stage actor is out of place but whether a film actor is out of place, and exactly what it is that makes a good film actor.

When he says that "true cinematic performances are only possible by turning one's back on convention, suppressing theatricalism, throwing out the tricks and the fake, sweeping away the 'professionalism' which has been clogging the wheels of film progress for twenty years", I know he is for me and not against me, and I might easily have ended my own brief study with his concluding sentence.

I think I am right in saying that the Russian directors were compelled to modify very considerably their theories about non-actors. After exhaustive experiments it was decided that actors who could display "passion" on the screen were vitally necessary.

Finally when Mr. Lee speaks of his twelve years in the Commercial Studios I must beg him not to discount the hard work of those years and the experience gained in them. When he comes back to Documentary "to learn" (as he so charmingly and humbly puts it), perhaps he will also have a good deal to teach. We must not be too humble even when faced by the splendid achievements of Documentary! Documentary is not a static form, and much of its future progress may depend upon a willingness to retrace its steps in order to escape from a cul-de-sac.

I, too, want to be in the front line with Documentary when film propaganda comes to be recognised as the heaviest and deadliest gun in our armament (which I think is quickly happening), I only want to be quite certain that the muzzle is pointing the right way!

Yours, etc.,  
BERNARD MILES

25 Malvern Court,  
London, S.W.

## GEORGIA UNIVERSITY'S FILM NEWS-LETTER

The Division of General Extension of the University System of Georgia, Atlanta, Georgia, has established a "Film Service News Letter". The purpose of the booklet is to be an information service for those who use educational motion pictures furnished by the University.

The mimeographed publication is to include short descriptions of pictures available, films on special topics, suggestions for handling pictures and news on "all phases of audio-visual education, with particular attention to educational motion pictures." Distribution will be to educational institutions.

In the first issue were comments on recent additions to the organisation's film library and general news on educational pictures. Special instructions were given on the use of colour film. Also a few highlights from some of the comments made at the Fourth Annual Southern Conference of Audio-Visual Education were included.



# ART AND THE ART-DIRECTOR

A Review of EDWARD CARRICK'S book *Designing for Moving Pictures*

(Studio 8s. 6d.) by PAUL ROTH

IN DECEMBER, 1928, the B.I.P. studios fired me lickety-spit for writing a rude article in *Film Weekly*. The article stated the bad break given art-directors in British studios. It drew a comparison between the dreary cycle of cabarets, bathrooms, boudoirs and "old world" cottages which appeared in British films of the period and the imaginative sets being created in German and French films. For the best part of that year I had been at first an "outside man" (getting properties and dressing sets for 12 hours a day seven days a week) and then promoted to the art-department itself under that wizard for concoctions-out-of-nothing, Norman Arnold. The *Film Weekly* article, I think, expressed the pent-up feelings of all of us working on set-designing at B.I.P. We were drugged by the same old demands, working for third-rate directors who were not prepared to accept any new ideas and whose estimate of set-designs was based on the Wembley Exhibition and Lyons Corner Houses. The only bright spot in the studio was Alfred Jünge, brought from Berlin by Dupont, who was building for *Piccadilly*. He was, however, permitted to spend far more money and use much more floor-space than we were. A few weeks later the studios closed because sound was on its way across the Atlantic.

Since that time many fine sets have been built in British studios by English designers such as L. P. Williams, Lawrence Irving, David Rawnsley, Duncan Sutherland and Ralph Brinton, and by Continentals like the late Lazare Meerson, Erno Metzner and André Andrijew. Most of us remember with pleasure the pictorial quality of films like *Fire Over England*, *Gaslight*, *Rembrandt* and *The Dictator*. They marked a height of set-designing which would have been impossible in the bad old days at Elstree. Whatever evil may be said about the fantastic plans for British film production projected across the grill-room tables at the Savoy and the Ivy by the Kordas and the Toeplitz, at least let it be said that they gave employment to creative people like Périnal, Stradling, Wong Howe and Courant of the camera world and Andrijew and Meerson and even Vincent Korda of the designers. In fact, if there is anything for which this crazy phase of British production will be remembered, apart from its squandering of money, it will be the design of its settings and the quality of its photography. Although these foreign names come first to mind, there were during the same time British designers (the word is preferable to the misnomer art-director) who, possibly not so spectacular, were doing very competent work. Among them was Edward Carrick (son of Edward Gordon Craig whose designs for the theatre hold their place in time)

who has now written the first sensible, thoroughly practical book about designing film sets.

You will not find Carrick's name on the credits of any memorable pictures. He designed for Fairbanks Jr.'s *Jump for Glory* and *The Amateur Gentleman*, for the Paul Robeson film *Jericho*, for Basil Dean's *Lorna Doone* and *Midshipman Easy*, among others. But you cannot read his book, inspect his drawings and set plans, note his tastes and respects, without realising his most full knowledge of his job. Unlike so many set-designers who trip in and out of British studios, Carrick will see his job through in every detail, from the first rough sketches inspired by the script to the dressing of the sets themselves and even to being "on the floor" while shots are being taken to make certain that the detail is as he intended it to be. I have come across so many so-called art directors who grow tired of their sets when they have made pretty-enough sketches and leave the practical realisation of their imagination to the unfortunate carpenters, plasterers, painters and "props". Carrick, to judge by his honestly written book, has no use for this irresponsible attitude. He insists himself on seeing to every detail of construction and dressing. His book stresses that not the least important part of the designer's work is the transference of the design from paper to reality "on the floor".

But set-designers, no matter how skilful and creative their work may be, are like cameramen; the full value of their work on the screen must be determined by the director. Too rarely in production does there occur that complete co-ordination of working between director, cameraman and set-designer. When it does happen, when every shot is planned on paper, or in model, by these three creators and then realised (often with inevitable minor adjustments) "on the floor", a film has a quality of completeness which lifts it way above the department-manufactured job. One remembers on this level the work of the great German silent films when directors like Lang, Murnau, Berger, Robison and Pick worked with cameramen like Hoffmann, Freund, Wagner, Rittau and Krampf, and with designers like Albin Grau, Roehrig, and Herlth, Erich Kettlehut, Klaus Richter, Otto Hunte, Paul Leni, Herman Warm, Walther Reimann, Rudolf Bamberger and the others of that noble school of craftsmen. Only very occasionally has that kind of team-work been found since in the studios: with Pabst, Metzner and Shuftann in *Kameradschaft*, with Feyder, Meerson and Stradling in *La Kermesse Héroïque*, with Feyder, Andrijew and Fuglsang in *Thérèse Raquin*, and in this country more recently with

Thorold Dickinson, Sutherland and Knowles in *Gaslight*. (Carrick might well have given more space to analysis of the work of these famous set-designers, and illustrations are badly lacking from *Cinderella*, *Warning Shadows* and *Destiny*, to name only three films notable for their design.)

Some will say that this emphasis on the Continentals is unfair to the Hollywood art-directors and that the work of Richard Day, Cedric Gibbons, Harold Miles *et al.* is just as fine. Much is ingenious, skilful and elaborately painstaking in Hollywood films. They are past-masters in the arts of the spectacular and the ornate; but, with very few exceptions, their sets always look departmentally-made. They are efficient, smooth and perfect in every detail that research can substantiate, but so often they lack the character of the single designer which gave distinction to the sets of Andrijew, Metzner and Meerson. The settings for *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *North West Mounted Police* and *Elizabeth and Essex*, all from different studios, might well have come out of the same art-department, yet no one could associate Metzner's designs for *Atlantide* with Meerson's sets for *Fire Over England* or with Andrijew's work in *Don Quixote*. The latter examples represent different styles whereas the Hollywood films, whoever their art-director, are all one style and not that of any one designer.

Few documentary films have so far called for set-designers. In most cases where studio work has been used, the sets have been kitchens, ship's cabins, parlours and offices, and the directors of the films, plus the studio carpenter, have done the job well enough themselves. (An exception was the Victorian panorama which I got Vera Cunningham to design for *New Worlds for Old*.) This may not always be the case. As the documentary film broadens in style and subject-matter, it may require set-designers and dialogue writers even as it has required composers and cameramen. The set-designers will of necessity have to work on less lavish lines than the feature producers require, but the best of them, I am sure, will welcome economy just as actors who have worked in documentary have welcomed sane shooting methods and directors who have known what they wanted. The kind of sets that may be needed are such as those in *Grapes of Wrath*, *Of Mice and Men* and *Kameradschaft*; that combination of realism and imagination so rare to find. Mr. Carrick himself is now working with the Crown Film Unit. The results of his work are awaited with especial interest. In the meantime, he can congratulate himself on having written (and drawn) the best book on the subject.



# FILM LIBRARIES

Borrowers of films are asked to apply as much in advance as possible, to give alternative booking dates, and to return the films immediately after use. H. A hire charge is made.

F. Free distribution. Sd. Sound. St. Silent.

**Association of Scientific Workers**, 30 Bedford Row, W.C.1. Scientific Film Committee. *Graded List of Films*. A list of scientific films from many sources, classified and graded for various types of audience. On request, Committee will give advice on programme make-up and choice of films.

**Austin Film Library**. 24 films of motoring interest, industrial, technical and travel. Available only from the *Educational Films Bureau*, Tring, Herts. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Australian Trade Publicity Film Library**. 18 films of Australian life and scenery. Available from the *Empire Film Library*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F. 3, sound films on 9.5 mm. available from *Pathescope*.

**British Commercial Gas Association**, Gas Industry House, 1 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1. Films on social subjects, domestic science, manufacture of gas. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & a few St. F.

**British Council Film Department**, 25 Saville Row, W.1. *Films of Britain*, 1940. Catalogue for overseas use only but provides useful synopses of 100 sound and silent documentary films.

**British Film Institute**, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1. (a) *National Film Library Loan Section* to stimulate film appreciation by making available copies of film classics. 35 mm., 16mm. Sd. & St. H. (b) *Collection of Educational Films*. The Institute has a small collection of educational films not available from other sources. 35 mm., 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**British Instructional Films**, 111 Wardour Street, W.1. Feature films; Pathé Gazettes and Pathetones; a good collection of nature films. A new catalogue is in preparation. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**Canadian Pacific Film Library**. 15 films of Canadian life and scenery. Available from the *Empire Film Library*. 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Canadian Government Exhibitions and Publicity**. A wide variety of films. Available from the *Empire Film Library*.

**Central Film Library**, Imperial Institute, S.W.7. Has absorbed the *Empire Film Library* and the *G.P.O. Film Library*. Also contains all new M.O.I. non-theatrical films. No general catalogue yet issued. A hand list of M.O.I. films is available. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Coal Utilisation Joint Council**, General Buildings, Aldwych, London, W.C.2. Films on production of British coal and miners' welfare. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

**Crookes' Laboratories**, Gorst Road, Park Royal, N.W.10. *Colloids in Medicine*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

**Dartington Hall Film Unit**, Totnes, South Devon. Classroom films on regional and economic geography. 16 mm. St. H.

**Dominion of New Zealand Film Library**. 415 Strand, W.C.2. 22 films of industry, scenery and sport. Includes several films about the Maoris. 16 mm. St. F.

**Educational Films Bureau**, Tring, Herts. A selection of all types of film. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Educational General Services**, 37 Golden Square, W.1. A wide selection of films, particularly of overseas interest. Some prints for sale. 16 mm. & St. H.

**Electrical Development Association**, 2 Savoy Hill, Strand, W.C.2. Four films of electrical interest. Further films of direct advertising appeal are available to members of the Association only. 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Empire Film Library**. Films primarily of Empire interest, with a useful subject index. Now merged with the *Central Film Library*. 16 mm. and a few 35 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Film Centre**, 34 Soho Square, W.1. *Mouvements Vibratoires*. A film on simple harmonic motion. French captions. 35 mm. & 16 mm. St. H.

**Ford Film Library**, Dagenham, Essex. Some 50 films of travel, engineering, scientific and comedy interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Gaumont-British Equipments**, Film House, Wardour Street, W.1. Many films on scientific subjects, geography, hygiene, history, language, natural history, sport. Also feature films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**G.P.O. Film Library**. Over 100 films, mostly centred round communications. Now merged with the *Central Film Library*. 35 mm., 16mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Kodak, Ltd.**, Kingsway, W.C.2. (a) *Kodascope Library*. Instructional, documentary, feature, western, comedy. Strong on early American comedies. 16 mm. & 8 mm. St. H. (A separate *List of Educational Films*, extracted from the above, is also published. A number of films have 'teaching notes.') (b) *Medical Film Library*. Circulation restricted to members of medical profession. Some colour films. Some prints for outright sale. 16 mm. St. H.

**March of Time**, Dean House, 4 Dean Street, W.1. Selected *March of Time* items, including *Inside Nazi Germany*, *Battle Fleets of Britain*, *Canada at War*. 16 mm. Sd. H.

**Mathematical Films**. Available from B. G. D. Salt, 5 Carlingford Road, Hampstead, N.W.3. Five mathematical films suitable for senior classes. 16 mm. & 9.5 mm. St. H.

**Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Co., Ltd.**, Trafford Park, Manchester 17. *Planned Electrification*, a film on the electrification of the winding and surface gear in a coal mine. Available for showing to technical and educational groups. 16 mm. Sd. F.

**Ministry of Food Film Library**, Neville House, Page Street, S.W.1, or from District Officers. 23 films mostly on cooking, nutrition and kindred subjects. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Pathescope**, North Circular Road, Cricklewood, N.W.2. Wide selection of silent films, including cartoons, comedies, drama, documentary, travel, sport. Also good selection of early American and German films. 9.5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**Petroleum Films Bureau**, 15 Hay Hill, Berkeley Square, W.1. Some 25 technical and documentary films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Religious Film Library**, Church Walk, Dunsstable, Beds. Films of religious and temperance appeal. Also list of supporting films from other sources. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**Scottish Central Film Library**, 2 Newton Place, Charing Cross, Glasgow, C.3. A wide selection of teaching films from many sources. Contains some silent Scots films not listed elsewhere. Library available to groups in Scotland only. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**Sound-Film Services**, 27 Charles Street, Cardiff. Library of selected films including Massingham's *And So to Work*. *Rome* and *Sahara* have French commentaries. 16 mm. Sd. H.

**South African Railways Publicity and Travel Bureau**, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, W.C.2. 10 films of travel and general interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & 4 St. versions. F.

**Southern Railway**, General Manager's Office, Waterloo Station, S.E.1. Seven films (one in colour) including *Building an Electric Coach*, *South African Fruit* (Southampton Docks to Covent Garden), and films on seaside towns. 16 mm. St. F.

**Wallace Heaton, Ltd.**, 127 New Bond Street, W.1. Three catalogues. Sound 16 mm., silent 16 mm., silent 9.5 mm. Sound catalogue contains number of American feature films, including *Thunder Over Mexico*, and some shorts. Silent 16 mm. catalogue contains first-class list of early American, German and Russian features and shorts, 9.5 catalogue has number of early German films and wide selection of early American and English slapstick comedies. 16 mm. & 9.5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**Workers' Film Association**, 145 Wardour Street, W.1. Films of democratic and co-operative interest. Notes and suggestions for complete programmes. Some prints for sale. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.



# NEW GAS FILMS ARE IN PRODUCTION

The Gas Industry has pleasure in announcing that two important documentaries are now in production. One of these will deal with the problem of feeding the worker under wartime conditions, the other with the effect of the war on the nation's health.

These films are planned to continue the Gas Industry's policy of maintaining public relations by the use of the screen to convey information on national problems combined with first-class entertainment.

The Gas Industry's film library stands as a record of high achievement. To the nationwide audiences which saw and praised gas films before the war have now been added wartime audiences totalling many hundreds of thousands of adults and children. Application for the loan of gas films—IT COMES FROM COAL, GREEN FOOD FOR HEALTH and other films dealing with food problems, HOUSING PROBLEMS,

CHILDREN AT SCHOOL, KENSAL HOUSE and others—are coming in from the organisers of film shows to—

- SCHOOLS
- CIVIL DEFENCE WORKERS
- ADULT EDUCATION GROUPS
- WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS
- HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES
- MILITARY AND OTHER HOSPITALS
- INSTITUTES
- CLUBS

and to the general public during Food Weeks, War Weapons Weeks, etc.

The longer hours of daylight this summer will give additional opportunities for film shows. Applications for the loan of gas films should be made to the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Food, or direct to the

**BRITISH COMMERCIAL GAS ASSOCIATION**  
1 GROSVENOR PLACE  
LONDON, S.W.1



**TWO NEW  
STRAND  
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**“HOME GUARD”**

with

**BERNARD MILES**

Directed by DONALD TAYLOR

---

**“EATING OUT  
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